Nov. 5,6 1998

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

Executive Notes

Your Provincial Executive Council met on November 5 and 6 in St. John's. A number of matters of importance and urgency to teachers were discussed. That meeting was followed by a meeting of Joint Council (Branch Presidents and Executive) on November 6 and 7. In an effort to keep you more informed and up to date on the activities of Provincial Executive on your behalf, the following summary of major decisions made at these meetings has been compiled.

Association Priorities
The top four priorities for the Association for the school year were discussed at length. These priorities, quality of work life, professional development restructuring, membership concerns, and teacher certification, encompass a great many issues and actions. A report was generated that outlined the issues and possible actions to be undertaken by the Association on behalf of teachers. The report is not all inclusive and may have additions at any time.

Quality of Work Life
The four main issues identified are workload, quality of work life (general), integration, and discipline and classroom management. Work in these areas has been ongoing and has included ongoing lobbying/liaison with the Department of Education re: curricular initiatives, inservice, and professional development. There is continued action from the Association as well as the committee level in these areas. For more information contact Brendan Doyle, President, or Wayne Noseworthy, Executive Director.

Professional Development Restructuring
The Association has been pursuing activities in the area of special interest councils, branch responsibilities, leave for professional development, collaboration with other groups, technology, and providing leadership. For further information contact Beverley Park or René Wicks, Professional Development Division.

Responding to the Membership
There are and will continue to be concerns from the membership on various issues but at the present time the Association is responding to school administrators' concerns, early career teachers/teachers in training, the discussion re: province-wide vote for provincial executive and official communication vehicles. For more information contact Brendan Doyle or Wayne Noseworthy.

Teacher Certification
The three categories identified as priority under teacher certification are taking control --; being proactive, reorganization of professional development, and certification revision. The Ad Hoc Committee on Teacher Certification met on October 27th. Preliminary discussions took place concerning mandate and objectives, and the committee reviewed a number of elements for preliminary consideration. A draft report of expectations of the Association re: teacher certification was forwarded to Executive.

For further information contact Winston Carter or Mike Luedee, Co-chairs, Certification Review Committee, or Beverley Park, René Wicks, Professional Development Division.

School Administrator Concerns
Several meetings have been held between government and representatives of NLTA but little progress is evident. Some of the concerns include quality of work life, work responsibilities during summer months, school councils, allocation of administrative units, lack of support staff, and responsibility allowances. More discussions are scheduled. For further information contact Fred Andrews, Vice-President or Lloyd Hobbs, Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Labrador Benefits Package
The first meeting of the six unions took place in early November. Further discussions are scheduled before the Christmas break with the intention of negotiations starting early in the new year. For further information contact Perry Downey, Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Collective Agreement/Pensions/Group Insurance
Joint Council was given an update on major changes to the collective agreement and the Teachers' Pension Plan. Information that was provided to schools early in September concerning the purchase of approved leave was reviewed and discussed. As well, Joint Council was updated on changes to Group Insurance premiums that will take effect in January. For further information contact the Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Special Matters
There was a session/presentation to Executive by Dr. Patricia Canning, author of Special Matters. Dr. Canning expressed her reasons for writing the report and the fact that very little has changed to address the issues of special needs. She relayed information from her study that reveals the concerns of teachers in the field. There is little or no training provided for people working with special needs children; there is increased documentation required that is taking up too much time and in many cases, destroying confidence in the system; technology often given more importance than books with a priority to get more computers. Dr. Canning was appreciative of the interest of the Association in pursuing these concerns and it was agreed to try to find a means to address these issues. For more information contact Brendan Doyle or Wayne Noseworthy.

School Representatives Training Seminars
The Association has decided to provide training in the form of information seminars to NLTA School Representatives re: their roles and responsibilities. This training would take place in September of 1999 and would involve a series of meetings based in nine locations throughout the province. These sessions are in the planning stages and information will be forwarded to those concerned as soon as it is available. For more information contact Brendan Doyle or Wayne Noseworthy.

Student Assistants Advisory Committee
This committee was established in late September after the Minister of Education promised to deal with the issue. The mandate of the committee is very focused with the intent of finding a means to have allocation of student assistants at the beginning of the school year. Discussions are ongoing. For further information contact Brendan Doyle or Wayne Noseworthy.

Joint Council
The following motions were discussed and approved by Joint Council:

- That NLTA adopt as policy a position that the Association will not support and will publicly object to the implementation of any new programs or initiatives unless the government demonstrates that:

  a) the recommended resources have been provided, all curriculum guides are available and appropriate inservice has been delivered;
  b) that initiatives such as ISSP's have been properly reviewed and a recognition of demands on teachers be accompanied with extra allocations to facilitate the effective implementation of such initiative;
  c) all new initiatives be accompanied by clear identification of training required, appropriate allocations of inservice days to allow for such training, school allocations be adjusted to accommodate all new initiatives;

  and that the NLTA inform the public when this is not done; and

  That in order to facilitate discussion on teacher quality of life the NLTA begin immediately to compile a data base which reflects the statistics on teacher's quality of life, e.g. real class size; preparation time; teacher abuse (verbal, physical); teacher stress (taking advantage of programs or off on stress leave); extra demands on time; and courses imposed without appropriate resources and/or inservice.

- That NLTA will immediately contact the directors of the 11 school districts with a view to positively standardizing the use of substitute days throughout the province so that teachers can at least look forward to some consistencies when requesting discretionary leave.
- A letter will be drafted to directors requesting wherever possible that meetings with parents and other agencies take place during the school day.
- The Legal Aid Policy has been referred to Table Officers for re-examination and possible amendment, and will be returned to either Joint Council or the BGM for approval.

Other Business
A request was granted from the Coastal Labrador North to change its name to "Nutak Labradorimi".

Executive approved the amalgamation of the Gros Morne and St. Barbe South Branches.

The Association will investigate concerns re: changes to federal government regulations dealing with caffeine either by writing the Federal Minister of Health or through liaison with the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

In response to a discussion for the Equity Issues in Education Committee, it was decided that the Association will determine the extent of the problems surrounding equality of access for teachers and students and, in particular, facilities which are not sufficiently wheelchair accessible.

The theme for Education Week 1999 was approved by Executive. It is "Let's Celebrate Education. Yesterday! Today! Tomorrow!"

The next regular meeting of Executive is scheduled for January 8 and 9 in St. John's. For further information contact Geralyn Costello Assistant to the President.